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ABSTRACT

This paper reviews the literature on the habits and preferences of American adults in four areas: reading, library use, television viewing, and adult learning. Within these areas, research results are reported for: (1) the demographic characteristics of readers and nonreaders, the reasons given for reading, time spent reading, the places where reading materials are acquired, the type of material read, and the amount of reading done; (2) the demographic characteristics of library users and nonusers, frequency of library use, the type of library materials borrowed, the type of library services used, and library user satisfaction; (3) the characteristics of television viewers, their reasons for watching, time spent watching, and the type of shows watched; and (4) the demographic characteristics of adult learners, their reasons for returning to school or participating in job-related training courses, the abilities and problems of adult learners, and the types of learning in which they are involved. The implications for public libraries of the research results reported in this literature are also briefly discussed. Books, journal articles, ERIC documents, and theses--mostly from 1970 to 1982--are included, although a few works done in 1949 and 1950 are covered for the sake of comparison. A 33-item bibliography concludes the paper. (ESR)

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A REPORT ON ADULT READING, LIBRARY USE, VIEWING, AND LEARNING HABITS

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PREFACE

The purpose of this paper is to report on what research tells about the habits and preferences of American adults in the areas of reading, library use, viewing, learning and to indicate some of their implications for public libraries.

My primary means of doing so was by doing a literature review. I included journal articles, books, ERIC documents and books on microfilm. I have included a few works done in 1949 and 1950 to use them as comparison to more recent works. However, the majority of material used as a base for this report is from the period of 1970 - 1982.

ADULT READING HABITS AND CHARACTERISTICS

The literature about adult reading habits consisted of nationally conducted surveys by professional survey organizations, local surveys done by libraries, Library Science schools and candidates for advanced degrees. Most of them dealt with reading and library use. Some of their observations and conclusions agreed, others did not.

There must be a determination as to what is the definition of a book reader. This has to be done for the survey work to proceed. It was usual for the survey to say that a book reader is a person who reads a certain number of books in a certain period of time. The Yankelovich survey, for example, said a book reader read at least one book in the six months prior to the study.[1]

A non-book reader is a person who reads only magazines and/or newspapers. A non-reader is a person who reported they did not read books, magazines or newspapers. (This can be never read, or that they did not read during the time in question.)

Let us look at who the literature says are book readers. The statistics from various surveys tell us what kind of reading is done by various groups. Reading is analyzed according to sex, race, educational level, marital status, number of children at home, occupation, income, place of residence. Here are a few conclusions from the data gathered in the Yankelovich study, which was summarized by John Cole.

A book reader is more likely to be female, under the age of 49, be, at least, a high school graduate and quite likely to have some college education. She is likely to be married, be employed full or part-time, be a student or housewife, and be involved in service and professional organizations.

The non-book reader is more likely to be male, have a high school education or less, be unemployed or retired, and have fewer children.

The non reader is more likely to be male, be over age 50, have a high school education or less, (have income commensurate with educational level), be unemployed or retired, be married, have fewer children and not be active in organizations.[2]

"Overall, the book reader market is heavily female and 'up-scale' (though by no means an elite class). Non book readers represent, perhaps, the least privileged group--particularly in contrast to book readers."[3]

Many of the reports I read indicated that demographic characteristics are interesting but do not tell us why people read. They are also not really good predictors of reading habits. The person's educational level is the only characteristic almost all of the literature indicated was a good predictor. This is a key and important characteristic of reading and of library use.

Some of the literature examined the non-reader and gave some background on the person. He may be a person who used to read, but has not done so recently (perhaps for over 2 to 5 years, for example). He may have never been a reader, having never developed a positive attitude or the habit of reading. Phillip Ennis lists these barriers to reading--poor reading skills, life cycle turning

points, pressures from job or school and the availability of books.[4] George McEvoy presents these factors as having an influence on the amount and type of reading (1) the presence of basic skills, (2) finding reading pleasurable and (3) the ability to integrate reading with other activities of life.[5]

Some readers are more in the habit of reading non-book material such as magazines and newspapers. In 1950 Angus Campbell reported that 80% of the general population read the daily newspaper (even those who did not read books).[6] The Gallup report, done for the Chief Officers of the State Library Agencies in 1976, found that 66% of the general population reported reading the newspaper every day.[7] It was usually noted that men and women reported reading different sections of the newspapers. Men and women were also found, I think predictable, to have differing preferences for magazines. The majority of respondents in the Gallup report, 1976, read one, or less than one, magazine a week. They were usually obtained through subscription, borrowed from friends or purchased at store or newstand . The library placed seventh as a source of magazines.[8] Bernard Berelsen tells us that most book readers also read newspapers and magazines.[9]

Reasons or Motives for reading.

Most of the surveys and articles asked the respondents why they read. The two major reasons given were (1) pleasure and (2) for general knowledge. Their placement in rank varied with the sex of the reader and whether the person read books or non-book materials.

Pleasure was most often listed as the primary motivation by women and book readers. Reading for general knowledge (to be a

better informed person) was given most often as the primary reason for reading by non-book readers and by men. Some of the other reasons given in various studies for reading are, relaxation, to obtain knowledge for work or career, as a time filler, for religious or spiritual reasons, to escape, to fulfill educational requirements, to be able to discuss current events and for self-improvement.

Larry Mikulecky observed that the intensity and variety of motivations were the same for most groups of readers - regardless of sex, race or education.[10]

Ann Marie Haase felt that the education of the reader did have a relationship to whether pleasure or general knowledge was listed as the primary motivation.[11]

Time spent reading.

Reading does still seem to be a popular leisure time activity of American adults. Also, many adults engage in job and work-related reading. The amount of time each individual spent reading varied with each study.

The Yankelovich report said book readers spent an average of 14 hours per week reading. Reading by non-book readers was an average of 6 hours per week.[12]

Kathleen Murphy, in her Master's Thesis, reported that those she surveyed devoted an average of 2 hours a day to pleasure reading and 1½ hours a day to job-related reading.[13]

Larry Mikulecky included the following chart in his report compating 1979 figures with those of Amiel Sharon in 1971.[14]

(average time in minutes)

	Job-related	Blacks	Whites	Male	Female	Total
1979	73	142	158	150	164	158
1971	30	61	113	113	101	106

The Gallup report done in 1976 for the New Jersey State Library asked its respondents to name their favorite leisure time activities. The following list shows the five most named activities: (1) sports, (2) reading, (3) watching TV, (4) handwork, (5) hobbies.[15] There were some differences in the listing when the results were analyzed by sex and by educational level, for instance. However, I think it is an accurate assumption that reading was a popular activity of New Jersey adults. It is probably accurate to assume that reading is a fairly popular activity of American adults in general.

Where is reading material acquired?

The major point of agreement among the information given in the literature is that purchasing is the most popular means of acquiring reading materials. The second and third place on a list of acquisition sources was either (a) borrowing from a friend or family member, or (b) obtaining through the library. Whether a or b had second or third place on the list depended upon the individual study. Bernard Berelson, Angus Campbell and Phillip Ennis all had the library in second place and friends in third place. The Yankelovich report and the Gallup reports for the ALA and for the State Library Agencies had borrowing from friends in second place and from the library in third place.

Even when some of the reports listed the results by general population, and also showed figures for library users only, the

main means of acquisition remained purchasing.

What do adults read?

The type of material chosen to be read varies with the sex, educational level, and motivation of the readers. George McEvoy, in the Journal of Communication, felt his results showed that fiction materials were the primary choice of those persons reading for pleasure, especially women. Non-fiction was named the first choice of those reading for specific knowledge. Newspapers were best for general knowledge. He also reported that 39% of the sample said they read only newspapers and magazines, and 55% said they read books, as well as, newspapers and magazines.[16]

Mikulecky reported that he found men engaged in more job-related reading than did women.[17]

The Gallup report done in 1976 for the American Library Association, listed the preferences of all respondents.[18]

Fiction	58%
Non-fiction	52%
Specialty Reference	46%

The Yankelovich report stated that no strong preference emerged among book readers, but the following categories were the most popular.[19]

Fiction
- action/adventure
- historical novels
- mysteries/detective
- short stories
- modern dramatic novels
- romance/gothic

Non-fiction
- biographies and autobiographies
- cookbooks
- history
- religion
- instruction/"How to"
- current events
- sports
- psychology
- self-help

How much reading is done?

Research also can tell us how many books the readers are reading. The Gallup report of 1978 gave these results.[20]

number of books read in past year	% of general pop.	classified as
none	13%	
1 - 5	25%	light reader
6 - 20	28%	medium reader
21 - more	24%	heavy reader
can't recall	10%	

"Light" readers tended to be high school educated and live in the south. "Medium" readers tend to be 18-34 years of age, college educated, have children under 18 in their home and live in the west and east. "Heavy" readers are more likely to be women, 18-34 years of age and be college educated. Non-readers are "skewed toward": men, 35 years of age and older, high schooled or less, no children in household, living in the mid-west. In the light and medium categories the sex distribution was the same as for that of the general population.[21]

So, we are able to get a general idea of how many books are read by certain portions of the population. We are able to see who is more likely to be a reader and how much he reads. However, it is important to remember that each person is an individual with his/her own set of circumstances and characteristics and does not necessarily conform to statistical predictions.

LIBRARY USE BY ADULTS

Here, as with reading, we must begin with a basic definition of a library user. It is usually defined as a person who has used the library a certain number of times within a specified period of time. A non-user would be a person who did not use the library within this time period.

The information given about library use follows the same basic pattern as that regarding reading. We see demographic characteristics of users, how often he comes to the library, which services he uses, how he feels about the library (satisfaction with the service), what improvements he would like to see and how he views the library as a source of information.

Who is a Library User?

The following conclusions can be drawn from the 1976 Gallup report for the State Library Agencies. A library user is more likely to be female, between ages 18-34, have at least graduated from high school and be a professional, business, clerical or sales worker. A non-user is likely to be male, over age 50, have less than a high school education and be a manual laborer, farm worker or not in the labor force.[22]

Similar conclusions can be drawn from the data in the Gallup reports for New Jersey, 1976, and for the A.L.A., 1978. Most of the studies agree that a frequent library user is likely to be female and under age 49. Also, they agree that the higher the respondent's educational level, the more likely he is to use the library.

Douglas Zweizig and Brenda Dervin co-authored a chapter in Advances in Librarianship, 1977., in which they presented an overview of the literature and used past studies for their conclusions. Their conclusion was that education is the most important demographic characteristic in predicting library use. They felt that demographic characteristics are of limited value in predicting library use.[23] Media use, community involvement, open-mindedness and the achievement motivation were important non-demographic predictors of library use.

Why some people do not use the library.

The 1976 Gallup report stated that some people didn't use the library because they weren't interested in doing so, lacked the time, were non-readers, lived too far away or they had enough books.[24]

Angus Campbell reported that some people said they used to use the library but do not anymore. The reasons they gave for this change were they were less interested in reading, the library didn't meet their needs, they obtained materials elswhere, or they had physical handicaps which made it difficult for them to use the library.[25]

Library Cards

I have not included much on this facet because the mere holding of a library card does not tell much about library use habits. From surveying the literature it is safe to say that between 35% and 50% of adults probably have a library card.

How often do adults use the library?

The study reported by Angus Campbell showed that 18% of the general population used the public library at least once a year, 44% had not used the library in last year and 37% said they never used it.[26]

The Gallup reports showed the following statistics:

Gallup report for New Jersey 1976[27]
46% of population used public library in last year
54% had not

Gallup report 1976[28]
49% of general population used library in past 2 years
33% - 3 years ago or more
17% never used library

Gallup report 1978[29]
51% general population used library in last year
47% general population did not use library in last year.

It would be safe to say that 49% of the general public used the library at least once a year.

The following chart shows a comparison of the number of visits users make to the library each year from two of the reports.

Use of library--number of visits by users each year.

	Gallup 1976[30]	Gallup 1978[31]
1 - 11 visits	61%	65%
12 or more	29%	35%
didn't use	8%	
don't know	2%	

What is borrowed from the library?

The results here are very similar to the category of what people read. The choice of books is related to the person's motivation for reading. The pleasure reader tends to choose fiction and non-fiction. Reference seems to be the choice of general knowledge readers. Gallup 1976 showed the following reasons for reading.[32]

Enjoyment/pleasure	82%
School/work	13%
Enjoyment/work	3%
Types of material	
Fiction	42%
Non-fiction	30%
Specialty/reference	30%

The statistics about readers preferences come from surveys and from circulation figures. The following most popular kinds of materials are listed by Gallup 1976.[33]

Fiction		Non-fiction	
Best Sellers	56%	Hobbies	62%
Mysteries/Science Fiction	43%	Do-it-yourself	50%
Classics	43%	Political/current events	48%
		Technical	47%

Bernard Berelsen, in the Library's Public, said that 60% of the books circulated were fiction, 40% were non-fiction.[34] Angus Campbell reported that the following types of material were most often chosen by respondents.[35]

Fiction	43%
Non-fiction	
Business or study	38%
Recreation	12%
Unspecified	10%
Children's books	4%
Newspapers and magazines	8%
Films	1%
Miscellaneous	29%
over	100% (multiple responses)

The preference for reading material is not absolute and choice often varies because users have different reading needs at different times.

Which services are used?

Book loan and reference services were the most frequently given responses. Women tended to be more frequent borrowers, men and students were most frequent users of reference services. Some of the other services named were reading newspaper and magazines, children's programs, record loan, watching movies and using copying equipment. Bernard Berelsen reported that, in 1950, people expressed interest in renting films, seeing movies and borrowing records at the library.[36] In 1976 and 1978 the Gallup reports

showed that getting information over the telephone, computer searches for information, bookmobile, extended hours, and increasing the size of the collection were services respondents would like to see at the library.

Are they satisfied with the library?

Another area research tries to measure is the user's satisfaction with library services. Bernard Berelsen found 75% of the respondents completely satisfied with library services and 20% were partially satisfied.[37] Angus Campbell reported that 70% of the respondents got what they wanted at the library, 14% were sometimes satisfied with library services.[38] The 1978 Gallup report showed only a small percentage dissatisfied with library services.

Mary L. Bundy reported on a survey of the Baltimore, Md. and Washington, D.C. area. In a six day survey of public library users 20,000 adults were asked to fill out questionaires. The results showed that one out of two users were able to get exactly what they wanted at the library. If the patron expressed dissatisfaction the reason given was that the material they wanted was either not in the collection or it was out in circulation.[39]

Other reports said that some dissatisfied users found the library difficult to use. They said the card catalog was hard to use, books were difficult to locate, the hours were inconvenient, the location of the library was poor and that some librarians were not helpful. The persons who felt dissatisfied with library service were definitely in a minority.

The Gallup report done in 1976, for the New Jersey Department of Education, asked respondents about their feelings and attitudes of the public library. Most of the respondents stated that the

library was a valuable part of their community, even if they did not use it themselves. "The symbolic value of public libraries is largely that of an educational institution".[40] Nine out of ten adults stated that it was important for every community to have a public library. However, only 25% said it would make a difference to them personally if they did not have access to a local library, and 50% said it wouldn't matter at all.[41]

The library is seen as generally important to have in a community, but not personally important.

The Gallup report, 1978, asked respondents which options they liked best if more funds were needed by the library.[42]

	general population	library users
charge users		
yes	50%	44%
no	44%	51%
increase taxes		
yes	43%	48%
no	50%	48%
reduce services		
yes	12%	13%
no	79%	83%

The general public favored charging the users over taxation, whereas, library users favored increasing taxation. Neither group favored a reduction of services.

One aspect of many of the studies and surveys was investigating how people obtain needed information. A finding that showed up in many of the reports was that the public library was not the number one source of information used. Angus Campbell reported that the library was the last source named for information on the subjects of home decoration, nutrition and childrearing. It was the third source named for information about foreign countries.

Respondents named experts, books and magazines, friends and their own experiences as sources used, before they named the library.[43]

A California survey, reported in The Unabashed Librarian, stated that their respondents used the library for information on legal matters, education, jobs or work related questions. They did not use the library for information on child care, current news, crime or housing.[44]

Frederick Williams, Herbert Dordick and Frederick Horstmann surveyed residents of three Southern California communities. They reported on this survey in the Winter 1977 issue of the Journal of Communication. The communities surveyed were Watts (low income, black), Boyle Heights (Mexican-American), and Reseda (middle income, white). They noted that respondents in Watts were more dependent on family friends and interpersonal communication as sources of information and means of transmittal. Those living in Boyle Hieghts relied more on institutions and agencies. The residents of Reseda used print media, television and the telephone as means of obtaining information.[45]

The means by which people obtain information seems to be dependent upon many factors. These include their orientation toward print media, their feelings about government agencies, their educational level and their general awareness of the available sources of information.

The Public Library Quarterly, in the Spring 1980 issue, devoted a series of articles to how and where various professionals get information needed for their jobs. They focused on an electrician, a Veteran's Advisor, an attorney, a programmer/analyst and a project leader. These persons all relied on resources within their company

or office and on advice of experts. They did not expect the library to have the information they needed.

The Gallup report for the SLA stated that 20% of the respondents used the library as a source of information, either to borrow books, magazines or other materials or to ask questions. The persons most likely to use the library to obtain information were those under age 35 and those who have had some college education.[46] The following statistics show what medium of information the respondents had used in the last two months.[47]

Printed matter (books, magazines, newspapers, etc.)	82%
Television	55%
Relative/friend	42%
Radio	36%

ADULT VIEWING HABITS

Much of the information on adult viewing is quite technical and is gathered for television stations and advertisers. It consists of extremely detailed statistical data regarding what the viewer is watching at specific times. I did not include this data in the material I reviewed for this report.

I used Ronald Frank and Marshall Greenberg's book, The Public's Use of Television, as the primary source for information on who watches television and what types of programs are watched. They decided to group the viewers in their study by common interests, rather than by demographic characteristics. (One of the purposes of their study was to test the validity of the type of grouping. Therefore, much of the information and data in their book was not applicable to my report). The authors felt that traditional groupings along age and sex lines, such as is done by A. C. Nielson, do not examine the motivations or interests of the viewers.

Frank and Greenberg divided viewers into the following fourteen categories:[48]

Adult Male Concentration
1) Mechanics and Outdoor Life
2) Money and Nature's Products
3) Family and Community Centered

Adult Female Concentration
4) Elderly Concerns
5) Arts and Cultural Activities
6) Home and Community Centered
7) Family Integrated Activities

Youth Concentration
8) Competitive Sports and Science/Engineering
9) Athletic and Social Activities
10) Indoor Games and Social Activities

Mixed

11) News and Information
12) Detached
13) Cosmopoliton Self Enrichment
14) Highly Diversified

Characteristics of persons in each of these groups were summarized. Those in the Adult Male Concentration groups has an average age of 29 to 53 years and were 77% to 96% male. Those in the Adult Female Concentration groups ranged in age from 35 to 61 years and were 69% to 87% female. The Youth Concentration groups included persons with an average age of 19 to 22 years. The sex composition varied with the group. Those persons in the Mixed groups were evenly divided by sex and ranged from age 34 to 47.[49] Members of any demographic group--age, sex, race, etc. can be found in any and every interest category.

The authors found that persons in categories 4, 7, 8, 10, 11 and 14 had above average levels of exposure to television. Persons in categories 1, 2, 3, 5, 6, 9, 12 and 13 were found to have below average television exposure. The exact amounts varied with each category. A relatively small amount of their time at home is spent watching television. [50]

Frank and Greenberg devoted a great deal of space to the listing of programs which were watched by each interest grouping. I have selected a few categories and their corresponding types of programs, to serve as an example of the information given.[51]

Group	Programs Watched
Money and Nature's Product	Adventure, Documentary, Drama, Sports, Investment Business
Family and Community Centered	Religion, Sports, News
Elderly Concerns	News, Religion, Drama, Soap Operas, Game Shows

Group-con't.	Programs Watched-con't.
Arts and Cultural Activities	Theatrical Performances, Musical Performances, Documentary, News
News and Information	News-commentary and daily, Sports, Variety, Movies, Documentary
Highly Diversified	Musical Performances, Adventure, Movies, Crime drama, Science Fiction, Children's programs, Religion

Of course, the type of programs watched can and do change day by day, for each person. Even so, programming information is quite valuable to network planners and advertizers, helping them decide how to invest their advertizing and programming resources.

Why do people watch television?

Andrew Morrison stated that the use of all media is constrained at times by age, family life cycles and occupational and economic cycles. [52]

The Community Research Corporation for Public Broadcasting issued a report stating that many of the persons they questioned said they watched TV in the evening during the week as a relaxing, leisure time amusement. Their weekend time was more often spent on other activities. The respondents indicated that they watched television for relaxation, because it is a habit, for companionship, to see a particular program or to gain information.[53]

How much time do adults spend watching television?

This type of information is given in many articles and survey reports. I have included a few examples. The Yankelovich report included the following information about the time spent with media by their survey population.[54]

	Total Population	Book Reader	Non-book Reader	Non-Reader
Average hours watching television	16 hr/wk	15 hr/wk	16 hr/wk	24 hr/wk
listening to radio	15 hr/wk	16 hr/wk	14 hr/wk	17 hr/wk

The Roper Organization reported that the median hours of viewing in 1961 was two hours and seventeen minutes, in 1976 it was two hours and fifty-three minutes. They stated that error in reporting viewing time is always a possibility. However, they felt the trend to increased time spent viewing is meaningful, regardless of occasional errors in reporting.[55]

Other authors and researchers have written about the amount of time spent watching television. John A. Robinson, in How Americans Use Time, reported that many measurements are inaccurate because of the respondent's tendency to inflate the time they report. Also, those people who agree to keep daily diaries of viewing time may be heavier viewers to begin with. Also, he states, many reports do not distinguish between the time when the viewer is watching and the time when he is doing something else at the same time. In 1965 - 1966, the data gathered by the use of a time diary revealed a smaller amount of time spent viewing than was reported by the rating services.[56]

LEARNING HABITS

Who is the Adult learner?

A good profile of the adult learner is given by Aslanian and Brickell in Americans in Transition. Data was gathered from 2000 persons over age 25. The authors concluded that adult learners are more likely to be

1. young (a) half of all adult learners are under age 40.
   (b) twice as many are between age 25 - 29 as there are between age 65 - 69.
2. Better educated
3. employed
4. those with high income
5. professional or technical workers
6. single or divorced
7. women with children under age 18
8. those with fewer than 5 children
9. White, Hispanic, Oriental, Native American
10. live in Pacific Coast states or urban areas.[57]

Aslanian and Brickell emphasize that these characteristics merely describe learners but do not tell us why they learn.

Formal adult learning is becoming more and more common. Adults are more comfortable with the concept of continuing to learn at a stage in life which is past the traditional educational period. Barry Heerman writes that the average age of the community college is well up into the twenties, if not older.

Many institutions are actively recruiting students from the Senior Citizen population. One study reported the enrollment by students over age 60 has increased 2,594% from 1970-71 to 1975-76.[58] Schools are offering more programs, publicizing them more and often offering reduced, or free, tuition.

Where are adults learning?

Not all adult learning takes place in a formal, classroom setting. Certainly, some occurs in basic adult education classes, community colleges and universities. Quite a lot of learning takes place at places of employment, an example is in-service training. Other learning experiences occur at community and professional organization meetings, and at home, as correspondence courses and self-planned learning.

Why do they learn?

The motivations adults have for learning vary quite a bit. Some of the motivations listed in the literature are the (1) accomplishment of specific objectives, (2) development of social contacts and relationships with others, and (3) sheer pleasure of acquiring knowledge.[59]

Of the 2000 Americans surveyed by Aslanian and Brickell 83% said they learned to help cope with a change in their life - either past, present or future.[60] These authors found that learning occurred to help the adult make a transition in his life. These transitions may be associated with a change in the areas of career, family life, leisure time, health, etc.

Some of the reasons given for learning were to gain skills, to advance in employment or to return to work. Another was to finish education that was interrupted, as in the case of many Vietnam Veterans. Other reasons were to increase job flexibility, and, in the case of senior citizens, to fill up increased leisure time and find intellectual challenges.

Lifelong learning.

The area of adult learning is being given the title "Lifelong Learning" by many writers. This is the up and coming "hot topic" in the educational field. Educators are recognizing the growing trend by adults to pursue some form of learning, even after the usual age for education has passed. Lifelong learning encompasses formal, informal and self-planned learning experiences.

More attention is being devoted to the adult learner by educational institutions. They realize that the adult may want and need something other than a formal classroom learning experience. He may respond better to independent study, programmed instruction, or distance learning via radio or television.[61] K. Patricia Cross gives these characteristics describing lifelong learning: (1) it is space free-recognizes that learning may occur in any environment, (2) it is free of the credentials of the provider - the focus is on learning, not teaching, and (3) it recognizes that lifelong learning is an essential and pleasurable part of life.[62]

What kind of learners are adults?

Jerold Apps, in The Adult Learner on Campus, looked at the general ability of an adult to learn. The basic processes for learning are the same for an adult and for a child. We have something we need to learn and there are basic methods used to do so. However, there are some factors which affect the adult's learning process. Apps felt that the general experiences an adult has had may help him learn some things better than a younger person would. He stated "In general, as adults grow older, the ability to recall or remember information declines somewhat. Part of this decline is related to memory decay, but a larger part of the decline is related to inter-

ference from other stored information. The better adults can cluster and organize information for storage, the greater their ability to recall the information."[63]

Adults also have other distractions to their learning from job and family responsibilities.

What does he learn?

There are endless possibilities for learning topics. Most of the literature agrees that job-related learning is very important. Topics and courses that can directly affect employment are primary choices for adult learning experiences. Other topics of interest are family and home related, such as gardening, sewing, woodworking and auto mechanics. Also popular are leisure pastimes such as golfing, tennis, arts and crafts. Religious education classes and Bible study are other possibilities.

A person may be interested in many different areas at various times in his life.

Carol Florio found that the nine courses most popular with Senior Citizens were history, psychology, health, foreign languages, literature, painting, creative writing, religion and needlework.[64]

SUMMARY

What does all this information have to do with public libraries? It can have an effect on our programs, our selection policies and our entry into new areas of service, to name a few.

We are interested in what research tells us about adults and these areas because it provides a background picture of the average adult. For example, we know what he is like, what he does in his leisure time, what books he reads, where he obtains reading materials, how he feels about the library, how often he goes there, what he watches on television, who is likely to watch what programs, why he undertakes learning projects and what he is learning.

Reading the literature and examining the data research has provided, however, does not tell us about the patron using our public library. The statistics of any survey are valid only in that situation. We must survey our own community to determine who our patrons are and what they want and need. This can be done by implementing a program such as the "Planning Process". This system of formal study of the community helps us determine needs, implement new services, continue or modify others. We can compare the data gathered in our own community with that of other studies done nationally and in other communities.

Community surveys can be used to evaluate our existing services. It is important for librarians to determine if the services they offer are really meeting the wants and needs of the patrons. For example, are our hours convenient, do we have materials the

patron is interested in, which of our services does he use most often and which services does he feel are unnecessary? We can also ask what new services they might like and what changes they would like to see.

Much of the statistical data we gather about the patron and the community can be used when it is time to support our request for funding. If we have the data, we can go to our governing body and say "Here are the actual figures, this program is well used and quite popular. Therefore we think you should continue to fund it." or "A majority of the community are very interested in the new service. We would like an increase in the budget for this area."

Another way we can use research information is in the development of a collection development policy. An effective collection development policy is based upon knowing the community and its needs. The demographic data yielded by community and user surveys enables us to develop a profile of our patrons. Knowing the concentration of persons in certain age groups, levels, etc., helps us determine which areas of our collection to strengthen and which to develop minimally.

The selection of materials--books, periodicals, audio visual, the implementation of new services and programs, modifications in existing programs can best be done if we know our community. It is also important to be aware of conclusions drawn by other surveys of library patrons. An overview of who he is, why and how he reads and uses the library, what his viewing habits are and how and if he participates in learning projects, enables us to be more perceptive to these characteristics of our own patrons and community members. Therefore our selection policy and library services can

more closely meet their needs.

Some libraries have become involved with Cable Television programming. They may have based their decision to do so on such statistical data about their community and on data obtained in national surveys about viewing habits. They may feel that statistics show there is a large segment of their community that does not utilize the traditional services of the public library. Also, they may have found a large percentage of the community that expressed an interest in this type of Cable programming that would be received in their homes.

Brigette Kenney wrote about some of the ways libraries could utilize cable communication. Some of the options could be taping and showing community events, such as public hearings, legislative sessions, acquainting viewers with the services of the library and to offer video reference services (show maps and pictures that can not be given over the telephone).[65] It could also be used to support formal and informal learning activities. Cable programming can provide a means of making information of all types available to a large number of potential users.

Libraries can also become involved to different degrees in various learning programs in the community. Many studies have verified the rising interest in lifelong learning or continuing education. If the local public library finds similar data from its community survey, then this may be an area they wish to enter. Darlene Weingand felt that the library's degree of involvement could range from supporting programs to being an active promoter. The library may decide to increase its collection in areas in which patrons are studying, they may work closely with organizations sponsoring

educational programs or they may decide to be an independent learning center.[66] Libraries have a wide variety of resources and cover many subject areas. Therefore they can accomodate shifting areas of interest.

Another example of using statistical data to plan programs could be in the area of services to the elderly. A number of studies have shown that elderly people use the library less than people who are under age 50. One study showed that elderly people are more likely to get reading material by subscription, from churches, friends and senior citizen centers, rather than from the library.[67] Perhaps, if we find that senior citizens say it is difficult for them to get to the library, we may plan programs for them at churches and senior citizen centers, or increase our outreach services to include home delivery of books. If poor vision is a problem for them, then we can increase our collection of large print books and audio recordings of books. We may also be able to meet some of their needs via cable television programming. These are just a few examples of analyzing data and using it for program planning and collection development.

Community assessment is a valuable tool for libraries. The data it yields can be used to develop a community profile, be a factor in deciding how to allocate limited funds, help decide which materials to purchase and which services to implement, continue or eliminate. I have shown a few ways in which research can be of use to public libraries. There are many more. It is important for libraries to keep up to date with current research and its implications for library services.

ENDNOTES

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[23]Douglas Zweizig and Brenda Dervin, "Public Library Use, Users, Uses: Advances in Knowledge of the Characteristics and Needs of the Adult Clientele of American Public Libraries," in Advances in Librarianship, Vol. 7, ed. by Melvin J. Voigt and Michael H. Harris (New York: Academic Press, 1977), p. 240.

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[27]Gallup, Libraries in New Jersey, p. B-9.

[28]Gallup, Libraries in America, p. 29.

[29]Gallup, Book Reading, p. 22.

[30]Gallup, Libraries in America, p. 31.

[31]Gallup, Book Reading, p. 22.

[32]Gallup, Libraries in America, p. 25.

[33]Gallup, Libraries in New Jersey, p. B-41.

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